

for Christ to bless, you'd have been one to rebuke them, as sure as fate. That's just your spirit right through."

"What did he say?"

"Not a word, though he kind of flushed up. Guess he was mad. You see I was—the way I spoke was as bad as the words."

"You've got to ask his pardon."

"Yes," groaned her husband.

"You might as well do it now. I'll go the rest of the way alone—you go right back and find him."

"It won't be a mite of use, Ellen. The minute he hears of the church being re-decorated he'll be mad again. He can't abide anything new."

"But you will have done your duty. I'd go right off."

Mr. Clover turned obediently but slowly. There was nothing of the "strut" or "crow" in his manner now. He looked exceedingly meek.

Deacon Simon lived quite on the edge of the town. There he had inherited a farm and homestead. He had toiled hard over his stony acres, and they had yielded him but a scanty living, yet he was deeply attached to the old place, as all knew.

Mr. Clover was surprised as he entered the old-fashioned hall to find the carpet taken up, and only a big packing-box ready to be nailed up standing there in place of furniture. The parlor, too, was bare except for some chairs piled up two and two as if for removal. One of these was given him, and he was asked to wait for a few moments. Presently he heard the deacon's well-known voice at evening devotions in the next room. And these were the words that trembling old voice was speaking:

"O Lord, we thank Thee that Thou hast blest us with the shelter of this home so long. Now, go with us as we go from hence. Thy will be done. O Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all—in all—"

Here there was a break, and, in the silence, the sound of a woman's sobbing was audible.

A new idea broke in upon Mr. Clover's mind, and greatly agitated him.

"Can it be that Martin has foreclosed that mortgage?" he thought. "Yes, that must be it. I heard the deacon was hard pressed to raise his interest. Nothing else would have moved him out of his old place. I declare it's too bad. It's awful!"

His errand was forgotten; he was in a fever of desire to do something helpful. When Deacon Simon came in he went toward him with hand extended and with such earnest sympathy in his voice as no troubled heart could have refused.

"Brother Simon," he said, "I hadn't heard when I came, but it's just come to me that you're going to give up your home."

"Yes, I'm obliged to. It seems to be the will of the Lord."

"Oh, no," said Mr. Clover, "I can't believe it yet. Wait—wait; I want to talk to you."

Deacon Simon drew another chair from the corner and seated himself.

"I came," said his visitor, "to ask for forgiveness for the rude way I spoke at the meeting last month. I'm ashamed that I spoke so; ashamed that I showed such a temper. Do forgive me!"

The deacon looked bewildered for a moment, and then he seemed to recollect.

"Oh, that," he said, "I didn't lay it up against you. I might, perhaps, if I hadn't had so much trouble since; but other things put it out of my mind. I haven't anything against you, brother; I'm used to finding the church folks differ from me."

He looked so meek, worn, and patient—the old man who had been sometimes stern and severe—that Mr. Clover's heart was broken.

"The Lord forgive me," he said.

"And me, too," said old Simon. "I know I've been too dogmatical in my judgment, and often sorely tried the brethren. I can see it all, now I'm going to leave."

"To leave! You don't mean you're going to leave the church?"

"Why, yes, we're going up country to my wife's folks—for awhile at least. We've lost our home here, you know, and I don't see just how to begin again yet; I'm an old man to begin again."

"But we can't spare you. We can't spare you out of the church; we can't spare you out of the prayer meeting."

Deacon Simon looked searchingly at the honest, earnest face of Mr. Clover, and presently tears dimmed his eyes.

"You really mean it? you're saying it in earnest? Then, thank the Lord, seems to me now I can go in peace. I made sure everybody would be glad, and that hurt me most of all just now. I—I have loved the church. Nobody prayed deeper out of his heart for it than I."

"No; and I tell you we can't spare such praying; we won't either, if I can help it. Come, I want to talk this all over. I've got some money to invest. This is the very place I've been looking for to put it in; near by the town, rising in value every day. Martin's going to put it on the market; I'll buy it of him if you'll stay here and keep it for me."

The deacon could not keep the light from rising in his face, but he said steadily:

"The farm won't bring you the interest of your money. I've done my best on it, and I know."

"Never mind, in ten years it'll be trebled in value for building lots. And, besides, wouldn't it pay if there was some capital put in it, you know—fertilizers and new machines? I am willing to try the experiment, anyway, but I can't do it alone. Won't you stay and help me out in it?"

Deacon Simon had been a proud man. He had never asked for sympathy or help in his life. To have them poured upon him unasked in this hour of desolation was very sweet to him—sweeter than he had words to express. His heart clung to the old place. He could not refuse the friendly offer thus made to him. "What a